

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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March 2019

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by [Leo Sharaskin](#), PhD. Dr. Sharashkin, received his Forestry PhD from the University of Missouri after having received a Masters Degree in Natural Resources from Indiana University, and prior to that, a degree in International Economics from a prestigious university in Paris.

He is the editor of "Keeping Bees with a Smile". He is also a contributor to several beekeeping magazines, including "The American Bee Journal" and "Bee Culture".

After a stint in Hawaii, Leo and his spouse purchased a home site in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri where he realized he could start beekeeping in the manner that his uncle did... (His uncle kept bees since 1972) He emulated his uncle by setting up swarm-traps in spring in accessible locations within a few miles radius of their farm.

The initial goal was having bees around while the children were growing up, and to have honey like he remembered from home, but couldn't find for sale anywhere in the US for any price. He placed those bees into "horizontal-hives" he built from scrap and surplus wood. He found that the local stock was very robust against Varroa, and well adapted to the local climate.

After those hives produced a few hundred pounds of honey, mostly harvested by the crush-and-strain method, he pondered the value of the honey his hives produced. The market analysis included visiting local outlets claiming to have local honey only to discover that the honey wasn't really very local. The honey was mostly produced by migratory beekeepers or sideliners who harvested honey produced in Texas. Beekeepers in his region sell their honey for \$8 to \$10 per pound, and have difficulty marketing it.

"It's not even the product itself that sells for \$20 or even \$50 per pound; it's the story behind it, i.e." How you sell your product is what matters". Start by educating your customer. The taste is the only concrete thing your customer can decide on. The rest

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What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday March 7, 2019 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA. starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature [Billy Synk](#), Director of Pollination Programs, Project Apis m. His talk will be on "Supporting Pollinator Habitat"

Upcoming Meetings:

April 4, 2019

[Rachael Bonoan](#), Post doctoral researcher, Tufts University and Washington State University, "Why Bees Like Dirty Water"

May 2, 2019

[Mark Winston](#), Professor and Senior Fellow, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

June 6, 2019

[Tom Seeley](#), Department of Neurobiology and Behavior, Cornell University, "Darwinian Beekeeping"

July

No meeting – Marin County Fair

August - TBA

Annual Marin Beekeepers potluck

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is the way you explain how it's produced; how it's different from the Chinese honey at Walmart, how the bees are kept (chemicals vs. no chemicals); how the bees are worked; when the bees put away varietal honeys; how the pressing of honeycomb through a fruit press also extracts pollen and bee bread; how the comb used for brood imparts complexity to the honey; how honey crystallizes due to pollen and particles in it which were not filtered out to hide the origin, or make the honey shelf-stable. These are a few of the facts that can be presented to the potential buyer. Rather than being defensive about the taste of comb or an excess of pollen, or rapid crystallization, embrace everything, and explain it to the customer as a feature that just verifies the local origin, and local processing of the honey. Emphasize the artisanal nature of the product.

Other facts to convince the customer: 2/3 of all honey consumed in the US is not produced in the US. The \$1/lb. honey tax reduced the imports from China. Vietnam in recent years has shipped more honey to the US than their claimed total national production! That's because Chinese honey is being relabeled in Vietnam and other countries, and then shipped to the US. Filtering through 2 micron filters removes the pollen that allow the origin of honey to be identified. The process of filtering through the 2 micron filter requires heating the honey.

Our customers mostly want to know that honey hasn't been heated, and has pollens from the local plants. 18% of EU "honey" isn't honey at all. It's a sophisticated mixture of components that mimic honey chemistry. This information is shared to scare the customers, to raise their awareness. Once customers are convinced your honey is best, your demand escalates. Word-of-mouth is a factor.

European honey stores display many varietals in contrast with local stores. We should also feature our local flavors by timing the installation and removal of supers. Build anticipation of next-year's unique honey. "Honey is the taste of the place and the time."

When fed cane sugar syrup, bees get a sweet-tooth which will cause them to pass up lower sweetness sources of nectar that may have components they need for good health.

Beekeepers who use fat soluble treatments should not harvest honey from the brood chamber (leave it for the bees). Honey from treated brood comb can absorb treatment chemicals, and shouldn't be marketed. Treatment free beekeepers can harvest honey from brood comb, and the bee bread too, (which he markets for \$35 per pound). He harvests with a fruit press. He has 300 times more pollen in his brood comb honey than ordinary honey. A 12 oz. jar can contain as much

pollen as a whole 55 gallon drum of ordinary honey. 8 oz. jars for \$25/jar sells out first! It's the novelty.

The story of how you keep your bees is important to some customers. Organic... bee friendly handling methods... Hives made of natural materials... Hives artistically painted to cut down on drifting and appeal to visitors. With horizontal hives it's easy to rob the bees when it's cold... that's when the bees are clustered on the brood frames.

Honey that spends more time in the hive, particularly in the brood comb, picks up additional flavor, and has extra time for the enzymes to mature it: all the work was done by the bees. How about 'hand-made-honey?' No electric capping knife; no motor-powered extractor!

Cappings contain 17% honey. Recover it with a honey press or fruit press, along with some pollen. "Like expensive French wine, my honey improves with age. You can tell with the crystals forming..." "Everything is marketing."

Some customers are prepared to pay more for packaging than they are for the content. Honey in glass jars sell better than honey in plastic ones. The plastic containers made more sense for shipping by mail. Given the choice on the web site, customers were willing to pay \$5 more per pound for the honey in glass! European honey stores always pack their honeys in glass! An attractive label can be made from a two sided color design on business cards which are folded in half and attached to the neck of the jar with attractive gold Tinsel non-stretch metallic cord.

Make a Fairtrade pitch to the customer. [*Fairtrade labeling certification provided some assurance that the products were really benefiting the farm workers at the end of the supply chain.*] Support your local beekeeper because the bees enhance the local environment.

Thanks to Jerry Przybylski for providing the "What You Missed" column this month.

Beekeeping Classes

Workshops with Jennifer Berry:

Hive Splitting Workshop, Saturday, March 2nd 2019
from 11-1pm.
At The Woolly Egg Ranch, Mill Valley California.

Splitting hives is a fun and easy way to expand your apiary and prevent spring swarming.
Join Jennifer Berry at the Woolly Egg Ranch for this

hive splitting workshop, where she will demonstrate several basic hive splitting techniques; including walk-away splits, introducing queen cells to splits and placing mated queens into nucleus colonies. Sliding scale donations suggested starting at \$20 each.

Queen Rearing Workshop, Saturday, March 2nd 2019 from 2:00-4:00 pm.
At The Woolly Egg Ranch, Mill Valley California

Join Jennifer Berry at the Woolly Egg Ranch for a workshop on queen rearing. Jennifer will live demonstrate several methods for raising your own queens, including key preparations to ensure that colonies raise big healthy queens and different methods to induce the controlled creation of queen cells within a hive. We'll open a few of Jennifer's hives to see different stages of queen rearing, so come prepared in your light-colored clothes and bring the protective gear that makes you feel comfortable.

Please note: this is a working farm, so your common sense is appreciated. Please come prepared to be near open hives- no black, red or dark brown clothing, and bring the protective beekeeping gear of your choice.

Sign up at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com) or check out Jennifer's website at www.jennifer-berrybees.com

Classes with Bonnie Morse:

Intermediate Beekeeping series – field workshop

Sat., March 16, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, location TBD, tent. San Geronimo. Rain date March 23.
Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](https://www.thefairfaxbackyardfarmer.com). Limited to 12 people.

Intermediate Beekeeping

(Saturday, April 6, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$60)
Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax

An overwintered colony has explosive growth potential. This class will focus on space management: expanding hive size for spring, swarm prevention (including splitting), and if that fails, swarm capture, and setting up bait hives for swarms.

Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](https://www.thefairfaxbackyardfarmer.com).

Classes with Jennifer Radtke:

Split class early March: Watch the Buzz for more details or contact Jennifer: jenniferradtke@yahoo.com

Classes with Michael Thiele:

Apis Arborea – The Ancient Craft of Tree-Apiculture and Building Log Hives March 2, 2019, 10 am – 1 pm PST Interactive Live Stream

“Apis Arborea” is an attempt to redefine our relationship with bees and to create a new paradigm of caring for them.

We will look at the reemergence of ancient and traditional ways of apiculture, such as the “Zeidler”, the craft of caring for bees in living trees. Rewilding habitat and nest restoration for honeybees are becoming increasingly essential for honeybees to survive. As wild bees survive in non-managed ecosystems and nest sites, they represent a resource for new strategies for contemporary apiculture and a fundamental shift in bee stewardship.

During the workshop, we will explore various arboreal hive designs. Michael will go step by step through the process of making vertical log hives and share lots of video footage, required tools, and other resources. This live stream gathering will provide a meeting environment, which allows for interactive learning and discussions among participants.

For more info and registration go to <https://www.apisarborea.com/events/>

LocApiary – A vision for the collaboration of landscape, honeybees & humans
March 23, 11am – 1pm, \$25.
[Register on Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Local Bee Suppliers

Jennifer Berry

jennifer-berrybees.com

5-frame medium nucs. Check her website for ordering / availability

Bonnie Bee & Company

Bonniebeecompany.com

Sold out for spring 2019, but available to help split surviving colonies to make increases.

Roy Crumrine

Anythingbeesusa.com

Medium nucs, deep nucs and queens.

Catherine Edwards

Richmond, El Sobrante, Pinole: 5 frame nucs

Contact: catherine.edwards6@gmail.com

Dave Peterson

Nucs on deep frames. \$185 each. Contact for availability.

dpeterson307@aol.com

Hive Tips

By Bonnie Morse, [Bonnie Bee & Company](#)

This can be a precarious time of year for the bees. Forage is plentiful in some areas....and near eucalyptus, has been for some time. Bees use those resources to build up the population. But they may be doing so without keeping many food reserves available and that growing population can suddenly find itself with a food shortage if we suddenly get prolonged rains or the temperature drops significantly. Bear that in mind as you consider your management options at this time of year.

Adding space...or not

We've had a lot of rain and cool temps recently, but if we start to see warmer – and sunnier – days it might be a good idea to take a peek in your hive(s). Keep in mind that even mid-60's can be 30 degrees lower than bees need to keep the brood warm, so you might consider leaving small colonies alone. Not much you can do at this time of year and it will be very difficult...and sometimes impossible...for them to bring temperature around brood (which is likely there) back up to 90+ degrees. The best chance for a small colony right now is for you to be patient and let them alone for another month or more. Otherwise, your curiosity could lead to their demise.

How do you know it's a small colony?

- Perhaps you see very little foraging activity except when it is particularly warm or the colony is in full sun.
- If you have more than one colony, a small colony may have much less foraging activity and less pollen going in than the others.
- Put your ear up to the side of the hive and knock gently. The buzz of a small colony will be much less than that of a larger one. Fewer bees to be buzzing!

Booming colonies might benefit from some additional space. Some signs that your colony might be ready for space:

- Lots of foraging activity, even during times of the day when it cooler or the hive is shaded.
- When you open the top, there are lots of bees on the inner cover.
- If the bees had used propolis to plug up entry holes, they are starting to re-open them.

Lower portion may still be empty, even if boxes above are full of bees. We're OK with that. It can be a buffer to help prevent congestion....and swarming....a little later in the season.

Did you have a colony die out? It's important to

check your frames and rule out American Foulbrood as a potential reason. While in Marin the chances are low that it was the cause, we do get several reported cases a year. Because it is such a contagious disease, you need to rule it out. Otherwise, other bees in the area could find your colony and rob it out and spread the disease. If a colony has been dead for a while, you'll want to be looking for scales on the bottom of the cells in the brood area. Don't know how to diagnose your dead out? Don't be afraid to ask for help! Post pictures to the Buzz, asks a beekeeping friend to look at your hive, bring a frame or two to a Marin Beekeepers meeting, etc.

* Time to get those bait hives out! If you've got bees, you should have at least one bait hive out. Despite our best attempts to minimize swarming (which aren't always popular with the general public in urban areas – particularly if they move into the walls of someone's home), it can happen. Bait hives can provide a home to a nearby swarm, plus are just plain fun to monitor and observe during the season.



Installing a Bait Hive

Not sure how to do it?

Review Tom Seeley's book, **Honeybee Democracy**,

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for complete details on what his research has shown that swarms prefer in a nesting cavity.

No time to read? We've had success with the following set up:

1. Deep hive box (10 frames is approximate size that Seeley's research indicated bees prefer, though here in Marin 5 frame deep boxes seem rather attractive to them as well)
2. A couple of frames with empty built out combs (if you have them) in the center surrounded by empty frames with starter strips (or just empty space – but you'll need to add frames soon after they move in or else they will start building from the top of the box).
3. Do NOT include food frames in a bait hive. Food attracts ants and robber bees, and can serve as a deterrent for a swarm looking for a home.
4. Entrance reducer set to medium
5. Box above the ground 2-3' (higher if you are able)
6. Optional: Spray lemon grass tea (boil lemon grass until you make a dark tea) or other substances mimicking queen pheromones on the top of the frames and entrance of the hive.
7. Wait to observe scouts! And if you're lucky, get a move in.

A few more volunteers are still needed to staff our exhibit at Farm Day.

Farm Day is a very busy, fun event attended by over 1300 youths and 800 teachers and parents. Marin Beekeepers exhibit is always a favorite featuring an observation hive with a living honeybee colony, an empty hive, beekeepers' tools, extraction equipment and much more.

It is a great opportunity to share our knowledge and be ambassadors for our honeybees.

The kids always bring a lot of enthusiasm and questions. Even if you are new to beekeeping, it is a great opportunity to get involved and help out. It takes about six to eight people to adequately staff our exhibit. If you are interested, please contact Steve Lamb at stlamb1@gmail.com or 415-412-6125.

The last few years, a few of us have gone to lunch afterwards and are planning to do so again this year. Everyone is welcome, but it is optional.

If you are not familiar with Farm Day, it is a free event, open to the public, sponsored by the University of California Ag Extension. It features over 30 exhibitors. It is a little bit like the county fair, but without the traffic and parking congestion.

There is more information about Farm Day at: http://cemarlin.ucanr.edu/Program/4-H_Program/Farm_Day_98/

Farm Day

Thursday, March 21, 2019
9:00 am to 12 noon
Marin County Fair Exhibit Hall



Searching for the Queen

Pollinator Plant Sale



Date: Saturday, March 16 from 9:00am to noon.
Location: Greenhouse at the Falkirk Cultural Center,
1408 Mission Avenue, San Rafael

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Marin Master Gardeners are holding a sale of 35 varieties of flowering plants selected for their ability to attract California native bees, honey bees, and butterflies. We are offering a wide variety of beautiful garden plants that provide pollen and nectar from February to November. Plants will be sold in 4 inch pots.

Marin Master Gardeners will be present to advise on plant selection and cultivation, as well as establishing a garden to attract and sustain pollinators.



A list of plants is available from
elwoodrow1@earthlink.net.

From the Librarian's Desk

Many thanks to Doug Fairclough for looking after the library at the past 2 meetings! Very much appreciate the help!

We have a couple of new acquisitions. If you're interested in exploring different aspects & products of the hive, check out "Beekeeper's Lab". This fully illustrated volume contains 52 family-friendly activities and experiments exploring the life of the hive.

"Keeping Bees" is an easy to digest, comprehensive book for new(ish) beekeepers. The authors are British but the general concepts apply in our environment. Finally, for those who like to read about others' beekeeping experiences, we have "The Way to Bee – Meditation" and "The Art of Beekeeping".

Looking forward to seeing you and your books at the next meeting!